

Oct 25, 1962 (WH typing)

Political Path

This path has several branches, both as to the forum in which negotiations are carried out, and with regard to the steps to be taken.

With respect to the forum, we are already in the UN and this could be combined with private approaches on the side. We could follow up the U Thant proposals in order to get into prompt discussion with the Soviets. This is almost essential since the Soviets will almost certainly not put forward or indicate agreement to proposals publicly made.

Another method would be to propose or have someone such as U Thant propose a direct meeting with Khrushchev. He has publicly indicated his readiness for such a meeting in his letter to Bertrand Russell and could not have been expected, at this stage, to have made proposals directly to the President for fear of a rebuff. It would be difficult, however, for him to refuse an invitation from the President. A direct meeting would have to mean the continuance of the quarantine and would be difficult for us unless there was progress on proposals to ensure a standstill under UN control. It would probably involve discussions over Berlin or, as a minimum, our missile bases in Turkey. A prompt proposal for an agreement to a meeting with Khrushchev might defer or avoid strong Soviet reaction to our stopping one of their ships.

As a background for political action that would have any hope of success, it would be important to minimize, so far as possible, any forceful action against Soviet vessels in carrying out the quarantine.

The following political actions might be considered:

1. A proposal in some forum to withdraw our missiles from Turkey in return for Soviet withdrawal of their missiles from Cuba. This might be expressed in generalized form, such as withdrawal of missiles from territory contiguous or in proximity of the territory of the other.
2. An alternative approach might be to have a proposal for the UN to send teams to Cuba and Turkey to take control over the missiles there pending the outcome of negotiations. U Thant might be put up to advancing such proposals.
3. Approach to Castro

An approach would be made to Castro through a Latin American representative in Cuba, probably the Brazilian Ambassador, pointing out that Cuba was merely being exploited in the interests of the Soviet Union and that any of the possible paths by which the Cuban crisis can be expected to develop will result in the overthrow of his regime, if not its physical destruction. It could be pointed out that President Kennedy has stated that only two subjects were not negotiable between the US and Castro: military ties to the USSR and aggressive actions of any kind in Latin America.

If the Castro Government considers it has no freedom to act because of the presence of Soviet technicians, we would be prepared to undertake to deal with this problem. We would have to give some assurances, regardless of whether we intended to carry them out, that we would not ourselves undertake to overthrow the regime or support others trying to do so.

Comment on K letter of 26 Oct, 27 Oct, and JFK reply of 8 pm 27 Oct

1. K simply doesn't make any offer to withdraw missiles; he says that given commitment, ~~would~~ he would make commitment ~~not~~ that Sov vessels bound for Cuba ((at the moment? or indefinitely!)) would not carry weapons; and that there would no longer be any "necessity" for Sov specialists, or armaments. But SU had already said--on Sept 11--that they had no "necessity" for missiles on Cuba: with which we could agree. This is--evidently--not tantamount to saying that they wouldn't put them there, or once there, would take them out.

2. The Oct 27 letter is, in fact, quite compatible with the Oct 26 letter (though not with F-S exchange). If missiles were "necessary," then a trade with Turkish missiles wouldn't be acceptable, so far as Cuba were concerned. But if they weren't necessary...they were available for bargaining; removal of the Turkish missiles would justify the trouble of taking them out.

3. The JFK letter purports to read into the Oct 26 letter certain proposals--but these couldn't possibly be read into that letter. They just aren't there. This would be known not only to K but to anyone in Moscow who knew the K letter. If the ~~the~~ letter had ~~had~~ been published shortly, the effect would have been most peculiar. What JFK was really referring to was the F offer. (Did X explain this ploy in his interview with Y?)